

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SAN SA 05317 311836Z

62

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 USSS-00 SY-05 A-01 AID-05 /069 W

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R 311806Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9921

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 5317

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, ES, ASEC

SUBJECT: LEADING SALVADORAN BUSINESSMAN KIDNAPPED

REF: SAN SALVADOR 2591, SAN SALVADOR 2657, SAN SALVADOR 2717

1. SUMMARY - LEADING SALVADORAN INDUSTRIALIST AND BANKER, BENJAMIN SOL MILLET, WAS KIDNAPPED IN THE AFTERNOON OF CHRISTMAS EVE WHILE DRIVING NEAR HIS HOME IN THE SAN FRANCISCO COLONY OF SAN SALVADOR. ACCORDING TO WITNESSES, ANOTHER CAR BLOCKED HIS PATH AND SEVERAL WELL-ARMED MEN FORCED HIM OUT OF HIS CAR AND INTO THEIRS. THE FAMILY IS TREATING THE MATTER WITH THE GREATEST CONFIDENTIALITY, IN HOPES THAT HISTORY WILL REPEAT ITSELF (SEE REFERENCES FOR A SMILAR KIDNAPPING IN JUNE 1975 OF FRANCISCO "CHICO" DE SOLA)AND THE VICTIM WILL BE RETURNED UNHARMED. THERE IS SPECIAL CONCERN IN SOL MULLET'S CASE AS HE IS ALMOST 80 YEARS OLD AND HAS A HISTORY OF HEART TROUBLE. DUE TO THE CONTINUING SECRECY (BY THE KIDNAPPER) AS WELL AS BY THE VICTIMS'S CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 SAN SA 05317 311836Z

FAMILY) IT IS UNLIKELY THAT POLITICAL DEMANDS AND/OR

EFFORTS TO EMBARRASS THE GOES ARE LEADING MOTIVES FOR THE KIDNAPPING. THE PRECEDENT SET BY THE DE SOLA CASE OF LAST JUNE, A SIMPLE RANSOM FOR MONEY ALTHOUGH POSSIBLY FOR POLITICAL MOTIVES, MIGHT EXPLAIN THE DEVELOPING SCENARIO OF THIS CASE. THE EMBASSY HAS JUST LEARNED THAT CONTACT HAS BEEN MADE BY THE KIDNAPPERS WITH THE VICTIM'S FAMILY, BUT AT THIS POINT WE HAVE NO DETAILS. DURING THIS ENTIRE HOLIDAY SEASON GOVERNMENT OFFICES ARE CLOSED, FURTHER LIMITING OFFICIAL INVESTIGATION.

END SUMMARY

2. SOL MILLET IS CONSIDERED BY MANY TO BE THE FATHER OF MECHANIZED FARMING IN EL SALVADOR. A HIGHLY RESPECTED MEMBER OF THE OLIGARCHY (EL SALVADOR'S "FOURTEEN FAMILIEIS") HE FOUNDED A LARGE INDUSTRIAL AND FARM EQUIPMENT FIRM IN 1928, AND REMAINS IN ACTIVE CONTROL OF HIS BUSINESS EMPIRE. HE IS POPULARLY CONSIDERED THE RICHEST SINGLE INDIVIDUAL IN THE COUNTRY. ALONG WITH FARMING AND BANKING INTERESTS HE IS REPUTED TO BE WORTH OVER \$20,000.000.

3. THE FAMILY HAS KEPT A CURTAIN OF SILENCE AROUND THE CASE, AND HAS ASKED THAT GOES SECURITY FORCES NOT ACT FOR FEAR OF RISKING THE VICTIM'S LIFE. THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THIS CASE AND THAT OF DE SOLA'S QOINT TO A REPEAT PERFORMANCE OF EXTREME SECRECY AND CAUTION ON THE PART OF THE KIDNAPPED'S FAMILY, AND A PRIVATE SETTLEMENT OF ANY FINANCIAL DEMAND. RUMORS ABOUND THAT THE GUERRILLA GROUP WHICH CLAIMED CREDIT FOR THE DEL SOLA KIDNAPPING, THE ERP, EJERCITO REVOLUCIONARIO DEL PUEBLO, MAY ALSO BE BEHIND THIS OPERATION. SINCE MID-1975 THE ERP HAS SURFACED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, CLAIMING CREDIT FOR POLICE POST ATTACKS, RADIO STATION TAKEOVERS AND THE DECEMBER 15TH KILLING OF 3 NATIONAL GUARDSMEN.

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